Politeness Seen from Integrated Perspective

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Abstract: *The article presents an overview of the disparities in having defined the notion of 'politeness' so far, and analyzes the criteria of politeness in communication from different angles, including instrumental/strategic view, social-norm view, and modern view. The focus of the discussion is on the modern perspective – integrated approach, based on which a model of integrated approach is proposed for Western and Oriental cross-cultural research.*

Keywords: politeness, instrumental/strategic view, social-norm view, modern view, integrated approach

1. Introduction

From the variety of definitions of politeness, it can be seen that politeness can be treated as both communicative and cultural concept, '…*politeness is a social matter, and hence culture-specific.*' (Victoria [65:629]). It has different forms which are governed by cultures and expressed in languages. Additionally, the criteria of politeness in communication have also viewed from different angles. However, in general there are three major approaches to politeness: instrumental/strategic view, social-norm view, and modern view. In the light of the politeness strategies in different views and in consideration of features of the strategies employed in real life interaction, we would propose an integrated approach exclusively for research on Western and Oriental cross-cultures.

2. Content

2.1 Definitions of Politeness

The term of '*politeness*' dates back to c1150-c1475, late in the Middle English and originated from the Latin '*polit(us).* Since its first appearance, politeness has come to be accepted as 'the classic treatment' in communication. In other words, it is undeniable that politeness plays a significant status in human interaction; insufficient understanding of this cultural phenomenon may result in communication breakdown (Durkheim [17], Foster [18], Bock [8], Alder [2], Clarke [10], Brown [9], Levine [40], Richards [51], Goodenough [22], Harvey in Damen [14], N. Quang [47]). This importance explains why politeness is now widely cited by linguists, psychologists and students of social interaction, and much effort has been made by pragmaticians and linguists to establish universal research. However, the ways they approach this notion are different in not only its definition but also the norms to achieve politeness in communication.

Linguistically, Blum-kulka [7:131], based on the need, defines politeness as *'the interactional balance achieved between two needs: The need for pragmatic clarity and the need to avoid coerciveness'*. This definition, by nature, is the combination of the maxim '*Be clear*' in Grice's Cooperative Principle and the principle '*Don't impose*' in Lakoff's rules; therefore, it easily evokes the characteristics of negative

politeness in general. According to Leech, politeness is an important factor in explaining 'why people are so often indirect in conveying what they mean' and 'rescue for the Cooperative Principles' (Leech [39:80]), with cultural view on politeness, gives a definition in brief outline of politeness in communication, *'[politeness is] a system of interpersonal relation designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange.*' The motive and goal of politeness in communication is to create the harmony in communicating partners.

Different from Lakoff, on the basis of culture-specific awareness, Yule [72:60] believes that politeness is possibly treated as 'a fixed concept' or 'etiquette' within a culture, and he defines politeness as 'a number of different general principles for being in social interaction within a particular culture'. Thus, the norm of politeness is said to be culturally specific, in other words, language differs in how they express politeness. In addition, Yule defines politeness as a means to show the speaker's awareness of another's face.

Besides, one of the most popular definitions nowadays is Richards's [51:281]: [*Politeness describes*] '*how language expresses the social distances between speakers and their different role relationships - how face-work, that is, the attempt to establish, maintain and save face during conversation, is carried out in a speech community.*' It can be realized that Richards shares Yule's view of the link between the notion of '*politeness*' and '*face*'.

Laying emphasis on the consideration for communicating partner, Hornby [31:646] defines being polite as 'having, showing the possession of good manners and consideration for other people.' Clarifying what should be considered in Hornby's definition, Green [23:145] regards politeness as a means employed to express 'consideration for one's addressee's feelings'.

It is noticeable that in consideration of the function of politeness in communication, N. Quang [47:11] defines politeness as '*any kind of communicative act (verbal or nonverbal or both) that is intentionally and appropriately meant to make another person/ other people feel better or less bad*'. Thus, in comparison with Green' s concept, based on the function of making 'feeling good', N. Quang shows more clearly the two kinds of behavior: verbal and

nonverbal, and stresses the communicator's intention and the communication's appropriateness. Furthermore, he points out that a human being has a double status: social and individual; and if they are satisfied, he/she can get social harmony.

Such definitions of politeness, however, are '*a theoretical construct, a term within a theory of social behavior and language usage*' (Watts [67:03]). The fact that communication is culture-specific (Condon & Youself [11], Saville-Troike [52], N.Quang [48], Richards 51], Berko [5], Verderber [64], Levine & Adelman [40], Beisler [4]) leads to various notions of politeness perceived by different cultures; in the other words, as discussed by N. D. Hoat (46:22), beside '*the technical concepts of politeness as constructed by researchers in linguistic pragmatics as theories notions*', there exist '*the culture-specific or the 'folk' notion of politeness which is socioculturally and historically determined in any given language and culture or a social group*'.

'Polite' is defined in many English dictionaries as showing good manners and consideration for other people (Thorndice-Barnhart Highscholl dictionary [61:734], Webster's dictionaries [70:631], Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary [49:691]. Also, the Vietnamese term of 'lịch sự', the equivalent of 'polite' in English, is also associated with 'good manner toward other people' in many other Vietnamese dictionaries. More clearly, a newly published Vietnamese dictionary defines it as '…*having or showing good attitude and courteous manners in conformity with social conventions and rules*.' (translated from 'Từ Điển Tiếng Việt' [62:506]. In this definition, which is on the line with Yule's [72:60], the people's behavior is tied to the rules ad expectations of the particular society. Basically, the commonsense definitions of 'lịch sự' in Vietnamese dictionaries are not much different form the closet equivalent 'politeness' in English ones, yet the understanding of this notion is various. In the other words, the answer for the question of how are 'good' or 'courteous' manners varies from culture to culture because the people's ways to assess 'politeness'/ 'lịch sự' in the different communities in a certain time are not identical. For example, if in the politeness of Western culture, impersonalisation with formality and distancing is favored, solidarity and closeness among interactants is preferred in the non-western one. Additionally, the notion of 'polite'/ 'lich sự' has changed by time. In the feudal time, the Vietnamese, strongly influenced by Confucianism from China, considered 'good manner' as the one of 'the upper class and Confucian scholars in society' (N.D.Hoat [46:25]). Today, the Vietnamese, particularly Hanoian, understand 'lịch sự' as four principal notions of 'respectfulness, propriety, tact, and delicacy' (lễ phép, đúng mực, khéo léo, và tế nhị) (V.T.T.Huong [66:73]), which can be achieved by any of members in the community, not only by the upper class.

2.2 Views on Politeness

2.2.1 Instrumental/ Strategic approach
Though receiving many such different labels as 'instrument' or 'strategic' (Kasper [36]), 'indirectness' (Held [27]), 'second-order' (Watts et al [67]), 'modern' (Werkhofer [69]), the '*instrumental*'/ *strategic*' is chosen as the official

name for the first approach discussed in the study because this term can emphasize the importantly instrumental function of politeness that all the views in the approach share: politeness is taken as 'a means to avoid conflict or a strategy to save face' (V.T.T.Huong [66:15]). As discussed in Duong [16: 582-583]. The different views in this approach are grouped into three well-known ones: *Imposing normative principles to determine polite behaviors, giving principles of politeness in communication as 'do's and don't', and suggesting strategies for dealing with FTA in communication.*

In the approach of **imposing normative principles to determine polite behaviors,** Grice [24]'s Cooperative Principle (C.P) proposes that all communicators' behaviours based on a set of maxims and submaxims governing conversation, including *Relevance, Quality, Quantity, and Clarity*. Thanks to the guidelines of these maxims would constitute guidelines maximally efficient communication can be achieved. However, there may be many failures when people observe the maxims. Any violation of maxims can be a signal for the hearer to seek for a suitable interpretation of the utterance by a sequence of inferences. Let's examine the following example:
a) Is Mary a good girl?
b) She is my cousin.

B expresses his/her assessment indirectly and politely by irrelevant information. That means B's reply is conveyed more than it is said literally. Thus, in this case the Maxim of Relevant is intentionally flouted.

Another way is **giving principles of politeness in communication as 'do's and don't' of Lakoff and Leech** based on the framework of Grice. Lakoff [38:88] suggests three rules of pragmatic competence: *Don't impose, Offer options, and Encourage feelings of*. However, it is difficult for these rules to be considered universal because these rules tend to serve the function of '*Making people feel good*', in which the first and second evoke the impression of negative politeness. Besides, despite the fact that they work well in Western cultures with the emphasis on non-imposition and freedom of actions, they are not central to non-western cultures, where impersonalization is not always perceived as polite strategy but intimate relations and group solidarity are appreciated.

Furthermore, Leech (in Fraser [19:225]) gives his Politeness Principles: *Minimize, Tact Maxim*, *Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim*, *Modesty Maxim*, *Agreement Maxim*, *and Sympathy Maxim.* In this approach, politeness is treated within the domain of a rhetorical pragmatics, oriented to direct linguistic behavior. However, the main weakness is that these six maxims in communication, by nature, are overlapped, which seem to be only four maxims because Minimize interrelated to Tact Maxim, Generosity is to Approbation Maxim. Besides, some notions including '*cost*', '*benefit*,' '*minimize*', '*maximize*' seem to be vague. Such politeness maxims tend to be more '*positive*', so they could hardly be effective in communication in all cultures. Besides, they fail to account for contextual factors such as roles of participants, setting and sex. As a result, the framework seems to work effectively in Anglo-American culture with

the appreciation of social distance. Another point of argument is that Lakoff and Leech show a rule-oriented and normative approach to 'politeness'. Not only do their maxims seem to be imperatives for speakers to observe for efficiency in communication, but they do not explicate the importance of the notion of '*politeness*' in human communication. At the same time, these principles and maxims are not universal, so they cannot be used effectively in cross-cultural research.

The most impressive work on linguistic politeness is Brown and Levinson's [9] **with strategies for dealing with FTA in communication**. Brown and Levinson [9:61] define 'face' as *something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face'*. In agreement with Goffman [21] Brown and Levinson [9:62] claim *the public self-image of a person* the two kinds of faces, namely *positive face* (the need to be accepted by others, to be treated as a member of the same group) and *negative face* (the need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed on by others). A *face threatening act (FTA)* happens when a speaker says something that is a threat to another person's face; and there is a *face saving act (FSA)* if a speaker says something to lessen a possible threat. In addition, a series of strategies to minimize the threat, numbering from greater to lesser risk of face is proposed by Brown and Levinson. Not giving any rules, they suggest five ways to encounter an FTA: *-Doing the FTA on record without redressive action, baldly - Doing the FTA on record with positive politeness redressive action -Doing the FTA on record with negative politeness redressive action - Doing the FTA off record. - Do not do the FTA: S does not do or say anything to threat H's face.*

Brown and Levinson's framework is highly appreciated in the way strategies are ranked from *Don't do the act on record baldly (*which has no linguistically encoded compensation) to *Don't do the act* (where the face is too great to be compensated by any language formula so that the most appropriate politeness strategy is not to do the act). Besides, off-record utterances are seen more polite than bald-on-record ones.

Based on cross-cultural linguistic data on three total languages: English, Tzeltal (a Mayan language of Mexico), and Tamil (a South-Indian language), Brown and Levinson claim the universality of their theoretical framework. However, by putting negative politeness at a higher place than positive politeness they imply that the former is more polite than the latter (because the strategies in the figure are numbered from greater to lesser risk of losing face). On the other hand, while working on universals of politeness, Brown and Levinson themselves are well aware of the fact that some languages and cultures tend to be primarily '*Positive Politeness*', others seem to be primarily '*Negative Politeness*'. As a result, numbering 2 and 3 for positive and negative politeness respectively to a certain extent reduces the universal value of this schema. This theory seems to work effectively in many nations of non-Western culture and the cultures under Brown and Levinson's study (America, Tzeltal and Tamil) where people are inclined to employ more negative politeness, but it does not seem to be appropriate in many nations of Oriental culture, including the Vietnamese one. In Vietnam, showing concern, in-group membership and closeness among interactants in face-to-face in conversations are widely resorted and always considered more polite.

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson suggest three social dimensions contributing to the weightiness of an FTA and affecting the determination of the level of politeness: *the relative power (P) between the speaker and hearer, the social distance (D) between them, and the ranking (R) of the imposition in a particular culture*. According to Brown and Levinson, '…*for cross-cultural comparison these three, compounded of culturally specific dimensions of hierarchy, social distance, and ranking of imposition, seem to do a remarkable adequate job in predicting politeness assessments.*' (Brown and Levinson [9:17]). Thus, on the basis of these variables, the speaker can calculate the size of FTA and then make a strategic choice of polite expression. Many researchers have resorted to these factors for their analysis of cross-cultural similarities and differences in communication. However, due to an overemphasis on the intentionality of speech, the social index function of politeness suggested by Brown and Levinson is viewed through 'the prism of strategic functions' (V.T.T.Huong 66:52)

It is worth discussing Brown and Levinson [9]'s strategies of politeness, which, in comparison with the previous theory, is more practical and universal. However, their theory has come under much debate for many reasons. The strong criticism centres on Brown and Levinson's **notion face** and **focus on H's face**. In different cultures, the notion of 'face' is not always understood in the same way as Brown and Levinson's. Such empirical works on Southern Ethiopian (Strecker [57]), on Chinese (Hu [34]), on Japanese (Matsumoto [43]), on Vietnamese culture (V.T.T.Huong [66], N.D.Hoat [46]) unveil that the understanding of 'face' varies from culture to culture. Additionally, Meier [44:17, 31] does not agree with Brown and Levinson about their research focus on H's face. He claims '*Concern for H's face is only a by-product of the attempt to serve the intent of saving S's face. S's image, thus, becomes the central one*.'
Another line of criticism of Brown and Levinson's model is that the description of the FTA implies that an act is threatening to the face of either S or H. Thomas [60:176] argues, '*acts can be seen to threat the face of both S and H simultaneously'*. Furthermore, Meier's criticism [44:17, 29] is on the way that Brown and Levinson identify certain strategies and markers parallel to another communicative act (e.g apologies, compliments). He affirms that '*rather than being an instrument for making some other communicative act polite, an apology may itself comprise the primary communicative intent*' [44:2]. Additionally, Thomas [60:176]'s criticism is on the way that Brown and Levinson claim positive and negative politeness are mutually exclusive. In practice, according to him a single utterance can be oriented to both positive and negative face simultaneously.

A further criticism of Brown and Levinson's model is on the connection between directness and politeness. According to Brown and Levinson's FTA model, *indirectness increases politeness*. A series of empirical woks by foreign researchers (Tanmen [58], Blum-kulka [7], House and Kaper [32], Sifianou [54], Pavlidou [50]) and Vietnamese researchers (N.D.Hoat [46], H.C.Tam [26]…) show that the distinction between them are in '*muddy water*' (Meier [44:24]). Brown and Levinson's theory, as discussed above, is often supported by the data on behavior derived from Western cultures, not from non-western ones.

In brief, Grice's cooperative principles, Lakoff's principles, Leech's maxims and Brown and Levinson are the valuable works which lay the foundation for this domain. All the views in the instrumental approach highlight 'the instrumental functions and individualistic characteristics of politeness, linking politeness and the intention to defend face in a 'means-end' relationship' (V.T.T.Huong [66:15]). Yet, in this approach the crucial impact of social factors or social conventions on behavior in interaction does not receive adequate concern while impersonalisation is overemphasized, and in fact does not seem to be applicable to research on politeness in non-western cultures.

2.2.2 Social-norm approach
'Social-norm' view (Fraser [19]), the first-order approach (Watts et al. [67]), the causal-deterministic view (Held [27]), traditional view (Werkholer [69]), or the normative approach (V.T.T.Huong [66]) all refer to the alternative approach opposed to the instrumental one. Along line with Yule [72:60] when he defines politeness as 'a number of different general principles for being in social interaction within a particular culture', the researchers in this approach elevate politeness to a higher 'cover term' status. They believe that each community has its own rules or conventions which constrain their members' behavior and any polite behaviors have to be in conformity with this social conduct. Weinreich [68] is representative of those who describes politeness as the normal state within interaction, the polite person not evoking special notice. In the same vein, Zimmin [73:41] depicts it as 'simply doing what is socially acceptable'. Adegbija [1:58] describes politeness as 'a property associated with a communicative situation by virtue of which a person speaks or behaves in a way that is socially and culturally acceptable and pleasant to the hearer'. For this reason, Coulmas (1992:321) postulates that '*politeness is necessarily defined within the framework of a given culture'.*

A great deal of empirical research (Nakane 1972, Doi 1973, Barnlund 1975, Ide et al. 1989, Wiezbicka 1991, Coulmas [12], Matsumoto [43]) on the notion of 'face' and 'politeness' in such non-western languages as Chinese and Japanese brings out the results contradictory to Brown and Levinson's theory. In their observations, the Japanese, though living in the hierarchically and vertically structured society, as Brown and Levinson found, tend to be constrained by the strict social conduct. In Japanese culture, interdependence is valued more highly than personal autonomy, and non-imposition based on individual rights, which prevail in Anglo-Saxon culture, is not the characteristic of the Japanese. As pointed out by Wierzbicka [71:77], for a Japanese '[t]he important thing is to show deference and to acknowledge one's dependence on other people rather than to avoid imposition'. At the same time, she finds a lot of evidences of this characteristic in the Japanese's way of speaking. Also, Matsumoto [43:418] claims that 'in any utterances in Japanese, one is forced to make morphological or lexical choices that depend on the interpersonal relationship between the conversational participants'. This is why Japanese culture can be seen as a '*culture of antipatory perception'* and a '*culture of consideration*' or '*a culture bent on preventing displeasure'* (Weirzbicka [71:85]). This is a striking manifestation of the value of interdependence in such a group-oriented culture as the Japanese, which is opposite of the Anglo-American individualism.

Many of the observations in Chinese, a similar model of group-oriented culture to Japanese, also provide the data opposed to Brown and Levinson's hypothesis. Along line with many other researchers (Hsien [33], Hu [34], Ho [29], Chang [13], Le-woong [41], Gu [25:242] assumes that politeness in Chinese culture 'belongs to the level of society, which endorses its normative constraints on each individual'. Chinese culture is seen as 'a model of government and social and moral standards' (N.D.Hoat [46:24]). The expression of self-denigration and respect for the other person is embedded in the word '*limao*' (*li*: polite, *mao*: appearance). 'Li' refers to politeness in the sense of abasing oneself and showing respect to others, and the Chinese concepts of face are mainly associated with 'the relation between ego and society' (Hsien [33:45]) through the notion of 'Lien' (or 'Mien-tzu', 'Mien' in old Chinese). Thus, the data about Chinese culture unveil the fact that Brown and Levinson's concept of face with the focus on the individual self-image, which is applicable in Western cultures, does not seem to fit into the Chinese where rituals are both socially and ethically motivated and individual prestige and moral quality is valued highly.

Apart from the research on Chinese and Japanese language and culture mentioned above, some observations on the notion of 'face' and 'politeness' also apply to other languages and cultures such as, Middle Eastern (Parker in Valdes [63], Weirzbicka [71]), Spanish (Hernandez-Florez 1999 in Valdes [63]), Russian (Smith [55]), Polish (Weirzbicka [71]), Greek (Sifanou [54]), Javanese (Masumoto [43], Weirzbicka [71]), Korean (Hwang [35]), Vietnamese (L.V.Hy [42], N. D.Hoat [46], V.T.T.Huong [66]). According to Parker in [63], Middle-Eastern people's behaviors are rooted from the basic characteristic of the society where 'social morality prevails over personal morality' and ' concepts of right and wrong, sin and shame does not derive from individual's determination of appropriate behavior, but from what society in general dictates as the social norm' (in Valdes [63:95-111]). For example, one typical culture of Middle – Eastern society is Israeli where the low value is attached to social distance and 'solidarity politeness' is basically manifested in language by a relatively high level of directness (Wierzbicka [71:90]).

A cultural emphasis on interpersonal warmth (in private relations) can be said to be characteristics of Russian culture (Smith [55]). This characteristic is reflected in 'the extraordinary wealth of Russian expressive derivation and in particular, in the abundance of hypocoristic form of Russian names' (Wierzbicka [71:86]). Even, in such European languages and cultures as Polish and Spanish, 'face' and 'politeness' is not also perceived in the same way as the Anglo-Saxon including American. In Polish, contradictory to Anglo-Saxon culture, politeness is not linked with an avoidance of 'the impression that one individual is trying to impose his/her will upon another individual', which is evidently reflected in the use of interrogative device and directive speech acts (Wierzbicka [71:30]). Besides, for Polish people, politeness is associated with hostility and alienation, not distance as in Anglo-Saxon culture. Also, for the Spanish, 'politeness' is often associated with 'the acceptance of the individual inside the group'.

Some research on Asian cultures and languages such as Javanese, Korean, and Vietnamese finds out that 'politeness' is attached to social relationships, and though the use of any strategies is a strategic intention-based choice, it is still confined to the social norms established before. Lim and Choi (1996 in K.T.T.Huong [37:63]) assume 'the image of sociological self-given to individuals by society' in Korean culture, N.D.Hoa [46], L.V.Hy [42], and N.Quang [47] attach a high value to cultural and social conventions in Vietnamese politeness.

All in all, what claimed in Brown and Levinson's concept of 'face' and 'politeness' cannot find counterpart in many other cultures. Contrary to the universal politeness focused in the instrumental approach, culture-specific politeness is emphasized in the social-norm approach. In this approach, politeness is constrained by social factors rather than by individual calculations and social characteristics are embedded in motivations of politeness behaviors. The approach is appropriately used to describe such 'socially ritualized behavior' as greeting, thanking and formulaic expressions' (N.D.Hoat 46:31) which are necessary for social interaction in a particular culture. However, it is the fact that social conventions may be perceived in the same way in a particular culture, but the ways to express them may not be quite similar, depending partly on each individual's initial intention, capacity and facility. Moreover, if a personal strategy chosen many times by individuals will likely become a social convention. Thus, each individual has a crucial role in 'structuring and restructuring social order' (V.T.T.Huong 66:20). As a result, many criticisms of this approach centre on its overemphasis on the cultural and social constraints on individual's behaviors and its disregard of the role of individuals. Furthermore, since the approach being culture-specific, it has failed to deal with the dynamic, highly contextualized verbal behavior; accordingly, it has 'its weakness as theoretical concept establishing universally valid principles in politeness research' (N.D.Hoat 46:32).

2.2.3 Integrated approach

The criticisms of the weakness of the instrumental and socio-norm approaches calls for the alternative one which can both synthesize the qualities and overcome flaws of the two previous perspectives. Born in this context, the integrating approach, or namely 'synthesis perspective' (V.T.T.Huong [46]), 'Normative-Volitional approach' (K.T.T.Huong [37]), raising much interest to many cross-cultural researchers in the world, can cover both the normative and strategic aspects of polite language use.

Hill et al. [28] and Kasper [36] both suggest the study of the correlation of both strategic politeness and social norm politeness. Hill et al. [36:349] discusses two aspects exhibited by a system for polite use of a particular language: 'the necessity for speaker Discernment and the opportunity for speaker Volition'. 'Discernment' refers to the individual's behavior in conformity with by social norms and 'volition' to the individual's active choice based on his/her intention.

Fraser [19] with his '*conversational-contract*' view assumes that polite behavior is seen as a conversational contract between individuals, with their initial 'rights and obligations', constrained by social conventions and conditions (Fraser [19:230-233]). By linking politeness to the term and conditions of conversational contract, Fraser has attempted to combine the factor of individual choice with the conditioning perspective of social constraint on human behavior. Also, Werkhofer [69], in his comparison between politeness and money, realizes both their personal and social characteristic. According to him, politeness is a link between individuals and between the individual and the social. He, however, believes that the latter far outweighs. Fraser and Werkhofer originally combine both the individualism of the instrumental approach and the social determinism of the social-norm approach. However, in agreement with (V.T.T.Huong. [66:23] I think that their theories 'constitute more an epistemological method rather than an analytic program'.

In the same vein, Spencer-Oatey [56:30-33] with 'pragmatic *scales*' view suggests the scales of three sets of dimension 'need for consideration - need to be valued - need for relational identity'. Recently, Meier [44:32], one of objectors to Brown and Levinson's theory, proposes '*a set of remedial strategies, which facilitate convergence of S's and H's worlds, classified not according to positive and negative strategies, but according to their similarity in function in re-establishing S's image and narrowing the gap between S and H.*', and he suggests three 'supercatergories': S→H orientation (S 'moves' towards H), S← H orientation (S seeks to 'bring' H to S), S↔ H orientation (an appeal is made to return to the status quo). These proposals are new ideas, though being very sketchy and far from practical application, are really theoretical contributions to empirical research on politeness later.

Based on the synthetic theory in this approach, a number of Vietnamese researchers have conducted a series of empirical works on politeness in Vietnamese interaction. In H.T.Phien's study [30], a system of politeness devices in Vietnamese are investigated under the impact of the speaker's intentions, feelings, and the speaker-hearer relationships. N.D.Hoat [46:228] finds that it is difficult to

separate volition from discernment or '*to determine whether the speaker, in using polite language, is following social conventions or adopting a strategy*' and he, from his tested data, concludes that 'the structural variation of request forms not only serves strategic purposes or imposition avoidance, but are used to reflect the speaker's need to conform to the social requirements of the speech events [46:326]. Also, V. T.T.Huong [66:331] assumes that 'the politeness in Ha noi should be better considered as an integration of the normativeness and the instrumentality, of social and the individual, which have various correlations in the aspects of respectful and strategic politeness'.

Furthermore, in order to get a compromise between the tendencies of using positive and negative politeness in Western, where people are inclined to employ more negative politeness, and non-western countries, where showing concern, in-group membership and closeness among interactants in face-to-face in conversations are widely resorted and always considered more polite, N.Quang [47], though highly appreciating Brown and Levinson's schema, proposes another framework. In agreement with Brown and Levinson, N.Quang numbers the strategies from greater to lesser risk of face losing, but based on the nature of '*feeling good*' of polite behaviors in different cultures he grades positive politeness and negative politeness equally. 'Equal' here, in my opinion, does not mean that negative and positive politeness are both equally appropriate in all cultures, but it keeps the neutral characteristic in the theory and then flexibly employed in interaction in a particular culture. Thus, revising Brown and Levinson's concept, N.Quang's chart with the modification of the equality of positive and negative aspects seems more reasonably accepted cross-culturally. Additionally, N.Quang, in attempt to make Brown and Levinson's model more applicable to both Western and non-western cultures, adds some more strategies to the list in the 'universal' model. Besides, he realizes that with only three sociological factors - P, D, R given by Brown and Levinson, it would be difficult to arrive at any persuasive interpretations of communicative acts, events and situations in a particular culture. In order to overcome this shortcoming, N.Quang [47:228-238] suggests the following fourteen components of communication: *Addressor's parameters, Participants' attitude, Addressee's parameters, Purpose, Participants' relationship, Topic, Addressor's power over addressee, Message form, Participants' mood when communicating, Message content, Participants' temperament, Setting, Participants' feeling, Time availability*. Each component of communication mentioned above consists of many subcomponents. Thus, the three sociological factors - P, D, R given by Brown and Levinson are three among the fourteen components proposed by N.Quang. According to N.Quang [47] these components can be found in the second of the four layers of reference and affected directly by the categorical dimensions and indirectly by the flame of culture. Moreover, he also designs the matrix for intra-cultural and cross-cultural communication with fourteen components and fourteen categorical dimensions in communication, and considers it as the framework for intra-cultural and cross-cultural research. The most important reason is that these factors change considerably between equal and hierarchical cultures, group-oriented and self-oriented cultures, positive politeness-oriented and negative politeness-oriented cultures. Due to the different perceptions, values, beliefs, religions of those cultures, these factors are perceived differently and this results in different behaviors and relations. Accordingly, these social factors suggested by Brown and Levinson, especially P and D are more practically divided into many subfactors in great deal of recently empirical research (N.D.Hoat [46], V.T.T.Huong [66], K.T.T.Huong [37]).

In short, integrating the instrumental and social norm approaches is an essential need for research in different languages and cultures. It is a compromise to link the two extremes of politeness continuum: discernment and volition, which may help many researchers to reach their practical ambition to study not only Western but also non-western languages and cultures.

2.2.4 Integrated perspective in Western-Asian cross-cultural study

From the view of politeness mentioned above, we suggested cross-cultural research on politeness strategies done by the two populations: two representatives of two opposite cultures, namely Western and Asian, conducted in the light of the integrated perspective [16].

First of all, viewed from the instrumental perspective, Brown and Levinson's model with negative and positive face tends to be applicable to the research in such a Western culture as American, where the notion of politeness is linked with the individual face. Yet, this theory, from the real-life data found by the advocates of the social norm perspective, seems to fail to apply to such an Asian culture as Vietnamese, where the public face is focused and the individual's behavior bent mainly by social norms. The two groups of advocate of the instrumental and social norm approaches have erroneous views in laying an overemphasis on one aspect of the dual face. It is worth noticing that the emphasis on either the private face or the social face, in fact, does not mean that the other does not play any role in social interaction. In American culture, though the focus is on respect for the individual face, social politeness is also found in rituals and etiquette. As examined by Watts [67], the use of some expressive means such as *title* and *formal variety* in Western societies, though to a less extent than some honorific languages in Asia, is also seen to be constrained by social norms rather than by the speaker's conscious calculation. At the same time, in such a public-face oriented culture as Vietnamese, the reflection for independent self still exists in Vietnamese people's consciousness. The data collected by V.T.T.Huong [66:55-57] show the coexistence of the two aspects of politeness in native speaker's consciousness: respectful politeness being combined under the notions of 'lễ phép' (respectfulness) and 'đúng mực' (propriety), and strategic politeness under the notions of 'khéo léo' (tact) and 'tế nhị' (delicacy). More persuasively, the correlation between the speakers' linguistic behaviors and social factors has been revealed in a great deal of research in different languages. V.T.T.Huong [66] unveils the influence of the Hanoi speaker's social variables of gender, age and occupation, N.Quang [48] examines the impacts of a series of social factors including nationality, age, gender, marital

status, living area, occupation and foreign language on complimenting in Vietnamese and American etc.

In the light of the integrated perspective, the two sides of face are both found to manifest in any language though 'the degree of its mandatory usage and markedness differs greatly across languages and cultures'. (N.D.Hoat [46:65]). Therefore, in American and Vietnamese cultures, the speakers should be seen as 'the unity' of *the individual* and *the social*. The former with the face is expressed differently under the notions of positive and negative politeness and the latter with the face is characterized by social attributes such as age, gender and social status, etc. Along the line with V.T.T.Huong [66], we believe that the private face, 'mainly tied to the internal aspects of the self and public face', and the public face 'mainly tied to the external aspects of self' are both found to exist in both the American and Vietnamese cultures. More specifically,

'*the private face is the self-awareness and the desire to be respected as an independent individual with inherent attributes (abilities, desires, feelings, freedom, and territories, etc.), and basically, it corresponds to Brown and Levinson's notion of face as consisting in two basic wants: positive face wants (the desire to be acknowledged, confirmed and sympathized with), and negative face wants (the desire to be unimpeded upon and to have freedom of action). The public face competises self-awareness and the desire to be respected as a member of a bigger social unit with attributes and values acquires in relation to other members, including 'macro-social-attributes' such as age, gender, family status; and acquires social attributes such as ranks, titles, social positions and achievement*s.' (V.T.T.Huong [66:273].

The private face is seen as the motivation of strategic politeness and the public face as the motivation of respectful politeness. Thus, due to the presence of the strategic politeness it is impossible to simplify politeness in Vietnamese culture as the manifestations of ritualized behavior, though the emphasis is laid on the respectful politeness in real-life interaction. From this reality, beside the large investment into the respectful politeness (N.D.Hoat [46], L.V.Hy [42], N.Quang [48]) it is also necessary to examine Vietnamese politeness from the aspect of strategic one, which has not received much interest until now.

The strategic politeness, seen from V.T.T.Huong's view [66], is motivated by the individual side of face with its many different manifestations being encompassed under so-called positive and negative face suggested by Brown and Levinson [10]. The existence and nature of negative politeness in Vietnamese culture, however, are perceived differently by many Vietnamese politeness researchers. N.D.Hoat [46:58] claims that 'In Vietnamese culture there is no equivalent to the concept of negative face as posited by Brown and Levinson, which is said to pertain to basic claim to individual territory and freedom of action'. Conversely, N.Quang [47], in his study on politeness in Vietnamese culture, finds the linguistic evidences equivalent to the expressive means of positive and negative politeness strategies in American English suggested by Brown and Levinson, and at the same time he adds three more strategies (asking personal questions, avoiding personal questions, and

comforting and encouraging) to these pioneer's list of strategies. However, there seems to be a compromise in V.T.T.Huong [66]'s work on this issue. She, on the one hand, believes that the dimension of respectful politeness is treated in the universal model as a negative politeness strategy (namely, as 'giving deference') or positive politeness strategy (namely, as displaying 'group identity markers'), on the other hand, postulates that the notion of negative face in her view is not absolutely identical with the one in Brown and Levinson's. Unlike Brown and Levinson's politeness inclusive of negative one, which is described 'to be rationally chosen by individual speakers to satisfy their face wants and to achieve communicative goals', respectful politeness in V.T.T.Huong's view is considered 'to be behavior in conformity to the norms and conventions of society'. Thus, Brown and Levinson's model, due to their failure of in providing a whole description of non-western politeness, is only served as the one for 'the description of the strategic dimension of Vietnamese politeness' (V.T.T.Huong [66:91]).

Another important point should be clarified here is on which criteria the distinction between the strategic politeness and respectful politeness is applied in the thesis. How to distinguish these two aspects of politeness, which are separate but interrelated, is an argumentative question. Generally, there are two main ways: the first is based on their functional differentiation, and the second is based on the degrees of conventionality or normativeness. Functionally, according to V.T.T.Huong [66:215], politeness is divided into two kinds: *respectful politeness* (used to express the S-H status and solidarity relationship, satisfying S-H's public face) and *strategic politeness* (used to minimize rankings of the imposition of utterances on a human being as an independent and private self, satisfying S-H's private face). Based on the degrees of conventionality or normativeness, politeness is perceived in the two aspects: *rules* and *strategies* (Hill et al. [28], N.D.Hoat [46]). Politeness rules, highly conventionalized and governed by social constraints, seems to correspond to *discernment* while politeness strategies, relatively less conventionalized and constrained by individual intentions, seem to correspond to *volition*. The determination of the kind of the politeness strategies investigated in this study is mainly oriented to the functional distinction, but not entirely based on in the degrees of normativeness or conventionality for the two main reasons.

First, differences in normativeness or conventionality of each aspect vary across cultures in its degree and manifestation. In a private face-oriented culture, as discussed by V.T.T.Huong [66], the degree of normativeness of strategic politeness and its manifestations is obviously higher than the one of respectful politeness. For example, the expressions of polite requests in English tend to be highly conventionalized. On the contrary, in a public face-oriented culture, the degree of conventionality of respectful politeness far outweighs strategic politeness, e.g. honorifics are ritually used as markers of social status in such Asian languages as Chinese and Japanese. Consequently, the degrees of conventionality are not the good criteria to determine which kind of politeness indirectness in English. Second, if basing on the degree of conventionality, it is not easy to make a sharp

distinction between volition and discernment or to determine whether the language being used is of social conventions or individual strategy for the main reason that strategic language use can become gradually conventionalized over time. Accordingly, it is not easy to determine which expressive means are social norms or manipulated strategies.

However, the division of politeness based on the functional criteria is not absolutely opposite to normativeness or conventionality. V.T.T.Huong, when viewing respectful politeness as '*to be behaviour ….in conformity with the social conventions of intercourse*' [66:84], apparently does not deny the role of social norms in her classification. For this reason, I, though being inclined to the functional distinction, uphold the opinion that there is no clear-cut between the two kinds of strategies suggested by V.T.T.Huong. First, according to V.T.T.Huong, respectful politeness (e.g. general kin terms and tittles*)* is '*used to express the S-H status and solidarity relationship, satisfying S-H's public face*' [66:215]. However, we believe that it is impossible to separate 'solidarity' clearly from strategic politeness, especially in such a language as Vietnamese which possesses a rich system of address forms. In comparison with the American address terms, these diverse forms in Vietnamese have their own communicative functions and express much more grades of respect, solidarity and distance. For example, 'mình' (self), chúng ta, chúng mình' , chú cháu mình… (inclusive we), which are considered as 'respect-solidarity', one of the rules of respecful politeness in V.T.T.Huong's classification [66:229], are simultaneously used as in-group identity markers and undeniably seen as powerful means to express a common ground between S and H (Brown and Levinson):
-***Chúng mình*** *đi uống nước đi! (*Ler's go for a drink!*)*

Thus, it is obviously seen that such a kind of address term functions not only as respectful politeness but strategic politeness (positive politeness strategy) as well.

Moreover, in regards to the interplay between the two kinds of politeness strategies, V.T.T.Huong proposes a criterion for distinguishing a respectful politeness-oriented address terms from a strategic politeness oriented-ones that respectful politeness means are used as strategic politeness function '*when they are not used in conformity to the rules of respectful politeness*' [66:280, 283]. We, on one side, agree with this idea, on the other side believe that respectful politeness means function as strategic ones not only when they are not employed in accordance with the rules of respectful politeness but possibly when they are compliance with their rules as well. In the other words, the distinction of respective politeness and strategic politeness, to some extent, is relative not absolute because there might exist some cases in which these two kinds overlap for the speaker's communicative intentions. Let's take the following invitation as an example for this point:

A girl invites her aunt to her birthday party:

-***Cô ơi***, *cháu mời cô tới dự sinh nhật cháu vào ngày mai a.*
(Aunt, I invite you to attend my birthday party tomorrow.)

It is obvious that '**Cô**' is an address form used in conformity with the rules of respectful politeness, but it is possible used not (only) to express respect to the aunt but in combination with appealer '*ơi*' mainly as an external move to direct the aunt's attention and increase the solidarity or intimacy between the girl and her aunt.

Additionally, there might be a combination of the two kinds of politeness strategies for the speaker's dual goal. It is possible that expressing respect to H's status and satisfying H's public face simultaneously aims at or results in minimizing rankings of the imposition on H's private face and vice versa. For example,
- ***Giáo sư Haris,*** *chúng tôi rất mong **được dùng bữa** tối cùng giáo sư.*
  (*Professor Haris, we expect to have dinner with you.*)

It is possible that exploring such honorifics as '***Giáo sư***', or honorific labels as ***được dùng bữa*** to express respect to H's (public) face possibly results in satisfying H's private face and minimizing the imposition on H's face. On the other hand, such language use as honorifics and address terms in Asian cultures, though being constrained by social norms, are finally based on the individual's choice.

As a result, although agreeing with V.T.T.Huong's suggestion that the desire to have S-H power and distance differences is more oriented to the public face than private face, the negative politeness strategy involving honorifics such as personal reference terms and the positive politeness strategy involving address forms in Brown and Levinson's model, which belong to respectful politeness as named by V.T.T.Huong, are still under our investigation. However, with the aim at reaching compatitability and applicability in research in the strategic dimension in both American and Vietnamese languages and cultures and based on the functional criteria of distinction between respectful and strategic politeness, 'deference markers' such as honorifics mainly embedded in the system of personal reference terms and address forms as internal moves functioning to designate S and H constrained by the social conventions are not explored deeply into their systematically conventionalized rules of respectful politeness, but only examined as means determined by the individual choice to enhance solidarity and intimacy between S and H and minimize the imposition on H's private face.

Furthermore, it is evident that when using Brown and Levinson's model, the study has encountered some other criticisms by politeness researchers.

One challenging line of criticism of Brown and Levinson's model is on that the description of the FTA implies that an act is threatening to the face of either S or H. Thomas [60:176] argues, '*acts can be seen to threat the face of both S and H simultaneously*'. However, if closely examining Brown and Levinson's distinction between kinds of face threatened, we can see their explanation: '*…we may distinguish between acts that primarily threaten H's face….and those that threaten primarily S's face…*' [60:67]. It can be seen that the word 'primarily' implies that the secondarily threatening S's face/H's face, though not

receiving a deep analysis, is still counted. Based on Brown and Levinson's work, in my opinion, further research on the acts seen to threat the face of both S and H simultaneously may be carried out independently. However, this is beyond our study.

Another criticism centres on Brown and Levinson's focus on H's face. Meier [44:17] thinks, '…*we see S's face mysteriously fade away as Brown and Levinson proceed to focus solely on H's face. S's face 'adieu'*, and he [44:31] claims '*Concern for H's face is only a by-product of the attempt to serve the intent of saving S's face. S's image, thus, becomes the central one*.' To some extent, Meier's idea is right in his affirmation of one of S's purposes. V.T.T.Huong in her study on the functions of politeness in Vietnamese culture also finds the Hanoi speakers' tendency to respect both the S's face and H's face, but the latter takes a prominent role in social interaction. Based on her findings and dual aspects of face (private face and public face) [66:55-273], we can clarify the functions of politeness as follows:

> A-To satisfy S's face:
> 1-to show respect to oneself (status, age, gender…)
> 2-to achieve one's communicative goals

> B-To satisfy H's face:
> 1-to respect H's positive face (the desire to be acknowledged, confirmed and sympathized with)
> 2-to respect H's negative face (the desire to be unimpeded upon and to have freedom of action)
> 3-to respect H as a member in the society (status, age, gender…)

This division can reflect the coexistence of S's face and H's face, of the private face and public face in politeness behavior. A1 and B3 are linked to the public face of S and H.

A2 and B1-2 are linked to the private face of S and H. Thus, satisfying both S's face and H's face with private and public sides is the aim of polite behavior in social interaction. However, the fact that which has (have) priority varies from culture to culture, from situation to situation. In such Western cultures as American, A2 and B1-2 are focused, but in the Vietnamese A1 and B3 tend to be paid more attention (N.D.Hoat [46], V.T.T.Huong [66]). Also, to satisfy H's face, B1 may overweigh B2 in the American, but reversed in the Vietnamese (N.Quang [47]). Thus, in spite of the overemphasis on H's face in their universal model, Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies based on maintaining H's face is still explored in the thesis because the study investigation is confined only to H's positive and negative face in strategic politeness under the impact of certain social factors.

Furthermore, as discussed before, Meier [44:17, 29] criticizes Brown and Levinson's identifying certain strategies and markers parallel to another communicative act. Needless to say, the role of such independent acts as apologize and compliment is certainly assumed; however, in my view, this role may depend on the context: if S's main purpose is to apologize H for doing something wrong or to compliment H

on something, the acts certainly work with the primary role; but if S's main purpose is, for example, to invite H to do something, the act of compliment has a secondary role. As a result, such speech acts as compliment or apologize in our research into a particular speech act (Inviting and Declining invitations [16]) are treated as ones with a supporting role as in Brown and Levinson's theory.

Besides, Thomas [60:176] opposes Brown and Levinson to claim that positive and negative politeness are mutually exclusive. In practice, according to him and in my opinion rightly, a single utterance can be oriented to both positive and negative face simultaneously. Of course, Brown and Levinson [10:230-231] have already realized that '*the mixture of elements deriving from positive and negative-politeness strategies in a given utterance*' which '*may simply produce a kind of hybrid strategy somewhere in between the two*', and '*there are other uses of strategy mixtures that don't hybridize, but rather move the speaker and addressee back and forth between approaching and distancing in their interaction*'. Yet, their work is limited to the simple realization without deeper analysis and particular illustrations.

The universal model is also challenged by the line of criticism on the connection between directness and politeness. According to Brown and Levinson's FTA model, *indirectness increases politeness*. The empirical works by Tanmen [58], Blum-kulka [6], House and Kaper [32], Sifianou [54], Pavlidou [50] …show that the distinction between them are in '*muddy water*' (Meier [44:24]). Thus, the argumentative question posed here is 'Is indirectness more polite than directness?' If the idea that negative politeness strategy is more polite than PPS in Brown and Levinson's FTA model were right in any cases , the answer, to some extent, is 'yes' because indirect speech acts are 'the most significant form of conventional indirectness', one of negative politeness strategy. Nevertheless, in agreement with N. Quang [47:92], we think that it, in some cases, is not true because direct speech acts when combined with some redresses may be as polite as or sometimes more polite than indirect. On the other hand, while Brown and Levinson think that indirectness is a negative politeness strategy, i.e. negative politeness strategy is more polite than positive politeness strategy, Leech [39:108] has an opposite idea when he claims that indirectness increases positive politeness. Also, Meier's [44:24]), and a number of empirical works by different researchers (Gu [25], Scollon and Scollon [53], Richards [51]…) have proved that Brown and Levinson's conclusion is not universal. As discussed before, we, of course, have realized this flaw of Brown and Levinson's and believed that which (indirectness or directness / positive or negative politeness strategies) is more polite depends on different cultures, and N.Quang's modifications of renumbering the strategies in the FTA model is a good solution to Brown and Levinson's shortcoming. For this reason, to avoid 'the risk of over-generalization or ethnocentricity' (N.D.Hoat [46:290]) such a kind of research should not intentionally come to generalizations on which kind of politeness strategy or which culture is more polite. Moreover, in line with Meier's idea [44:2] '…*a particular culture's characterization in terms of*

positive vs negative politeness society cannot be viewed as absolute, but is dependent on the cultures being compared as well as on the particular communicative act…', the final generalizations in research would be confined to the similarities and differences in the use of politeness strategies in only a particular in American and Vietnamese, not to the whole characterization of the two cultures.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the focus of the paper is laid on politeness in communication, norms of which cross-linguistically and cross-culturally differ from one language to another. Most importantly, politeness is objectively seen from different angles: Instrumental approach, Social norm approach, and Integrated approach. While each of the instrumental approach and social norm approach reflects only one aspect of the dual nature of politeness in interaction: the individual in the former and the social in the latter, the integrated approach, in attempt to bring together some strengths and to avoid some weakness of the two previous perspectives, seeks a synthesis of the two aspects of politeness applicable to both Western and non-western languages and cultures. Originating from the perception of the progressiveness of the last perspective, cross-cultural research on Western and Asian communication should both critically adopts the framework of politeness strategies outlined by Brown and Levinson and selectively explores the amendments proposed by the opponent linguists**./.**

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